

Message Text

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SUBJECT: JUNE 4 ELECTIONS IN HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY

REF: HAMBURG 308

1. SUMMARY: THE PROBABLE RESULTS OF THE FIRST TWO
LANDTAG ELECTIONS SINCE THE FEDERAL ELECTION IN OCTOBER
1976 CONTINUE TO BE THOSE SET FORTH IN REFTEL -- I.E.,
AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY FOR THE SPD IN HAMBURG; DITTO FOR
THE DCU IN HANNOVER. BUT THE UNUSUAL NUMBER OF SPECIAL
INTEREST GROUPS AND THEIR TENACITY IS PROVIDING SOME
SPICE TO WHAT OTHERWISE IS AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN ELICITING
MORE YAWNS THAN PASSION. END SUMMARY.

2. HAMBURG: THE SPLINTER VOTE HAS BEEN A WORRYING
FACTOR BECAUSE WHILE THEIR ACTIVITIES ARE HIGHLY VISIBLE,
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THEY HAVE NOT BEEN A STATISTICAL FACTOR IN THE POLLS,
IN PART BECAUSE THE TRADITIONAL SAMPLING TECHNIQUES
WERE OUT OF DATE. NOW TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE ELECTION,
THE TECHNIQUES HAVE BEEN ADJUSTED AND SHOW A VERY
SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN SUPPORT FOR THE SPLINTERS,
ESPECIALLY FOR THE TWO ENVIRONMENT GROUPS, THE "GREEN
LIST" AND THE "COLORFUL LIST." THUS THE EXPECTATION

NOW IS THAT THE THIRTEEN SPLINTER GROUPS ARE EXPECTED TO POLL ABOUT 7 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE AS AGAINST THE 3.6 PERCENT TEN SPLINTER GROUPS ACHIEVED FOUR YEARS AGO. AS NONE IS EXPECTED TO COME CLOSE TO THE 5 PERCENT MINIMUM FOR BUERGERSCHAFT REPRESENTATION, THEY SHOULD NOT DAMAGE THE SPD'S VERY GOOD CHANCE TO ACHIEVE AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, BUT THEY MAY SIGNIFICANTLY DAMAGE THE FDP, THE PARTY ALREADY EXPECTED TO BE THE MOST DISAPPOINTED ON JUNE 4. THUS, ONE POLL SHOWS THAT THESE TWO SMALL PARTIES WILL TAKE HALF THEIR VOTE, WHATEVER IT MAY IN FACT TURN OUT TO BE, FROM THE FDP. THE FDP IS ACUTELY AWARE OF THIS DANGER AND HAS RE-ACTED WITH PLACARDS THAT PROCLAIM THAT THE FDP'S TRADITIONAL COLORS (BLUE AND YELLOW) MAKE GREEN* IT IS INGENIOUS BUT PROBABLY NOT EFFECTIVE.

3. THUS THE RESULTS IN HAMBURG, WITH THE RESULTS OF THE LAST BUERGERSCHAFT ELECTION FOUR YEARS AGO IN PARENTHESES, WILL PROBABLY BE SOMETHING LIKE THIS: SPD - 48 PERCENT (44.9), CDU - 38 PERCENT (40.6), FDP - 7 PERCENT (10.9), SPLINTERS - 7 PERCENT (3.9).

4. LOWER SAXONY: THE SITUATION IN LOWER SAXONY IS SIMPLER THAN IN HAMBURG IN ONE WAY: THE NUMBER OF SPLINTER PARTIES IS ONLY 8 AND WHILE THERE IS A GREEN LIST THERE IS NO COLORFUL ONE. IN ANOTHER WAY, HOWEVER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO JUDGE BECAUSE THE FDP FOUR YEARS AGO ACHIEVED ONLY 7.0 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AND HAS, IN THE MEANTIME, SWITCHED FROM A COALITION WITH THE SPD TO ONE WITH THE CDU. THE MAIN QUESTION SOUTH OF THE ELBE, THEREFORE, IS WILL THE FDP ESCAPE THE 5 PERCENT GUILLOTINE. THE ANSWER IS THAT IT PROBABLY WILL, IN PART BECAUSE THE PARTY THERE IS QUITE CONSERVATIVE, UNLIKE ITS RADICALLY DIFFERENT SISTER PARTY IN HAMBURG, AND CONSERVATISM IS THE MOOD IN LOWER SAXONY, A FACT THE SPD HAS RECOGNIZED IN ITS OWN CAMPAIGN.

5. THE POLLS NOW SHOW THE SPD AT 42.6 PERCENT, SLIGHTLY STRONGER THAN ITS ALL-TIME LOW OF 41 PERCENT TWO MONTHS AGO BUT STILL BELOW THE 43.1 PERCENT IT REACHED FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN IT RAN SECOND TO THE CDU. THE SPD'S DISASTER OF EARLY 1976, WHEN ITS COALITION WITH THE FDP BROKE APART, IS APPARENTLY STILL TOO FRESH IN THE VOTERS' MEMORY FOR THE SPD TO ACHIEVE THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IT WOULD NEED TO RECAPTURE THE LANDTAG IN HANNOVER. THERE IS, ADDITIONALLY, THE FACT THAT THE MOST EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGNER IS THE CDU'S ALBRECHT.

THUS, THE MOST PROBABLE RESULT IS AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY
FOR THE CDU, WHICH WILL THEN OFFER TO CONTINUE THE CO-
ALITION WITH THE FDP, WHICH WILL PROBABLY SAY "YES"
THOUGH NOW IT IS SAYING "PROBABLY NOT." THE SEOND
BEST GUESS IS THAT THE CDU WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE
STRONGEST PARTY BUT WILL FAIL TO ACHIEVE AN ABSOLUTE
MAJORITY, IN WHICH CASE THE CDU/FDP COALITION WILL
CERTAINLY CONTINUE. KISELYAK

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